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ABSTRACT

Methods are provided for preparing improved fermentation strains of the family *Enterobacteriaceae* which comprise the steps of eliminating the cryptic plasmid from the progenitor strain thereby creating the improved strain. Methods for reducing the

- 5 mobilization properties of resident plasmids in an *Enterobacteriaceae* strain containing a cryptic plasmid are also provided. The present invention provides the nucleic acid sequence of pS, a cryptic plasmid found in *Pantoea* which can be used to identify the cryptic plasmid in strains of *Enterobacteriaceae*.